

MEHUL Raj underwent his first eye test at the age of 13. The American Optometric Association recommends that children should have their eyes examined at three years of age, and then again before entering Standard One at about six years old.

With four siblings, a father who works as a cleaner and a housewife mother, an eye test just didn't seem high on the list of priorities when money was hard to come by. That changed when UCSI University's (UCSI) School of Optometry collaborated with Mehul's school, SMK Tinggi Setapak, and conducted a free comprehensive eye test for 400 underprivileged students aged 13 to 17.

Out of these students, 55 will receive free spectacles sponsored by UCSI's School of Optometry (SoO), optical group Focus World Vision Care and lens specialist Hoya Lens.

According to school head Asst Prof Dr Lili Asma Ismail, this CSR project is a joint collaboration between UCSI University's School of Optometry and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of SMK Tinggi Setapak and is supported by Focus World Vision Care and Hoya Lens.

The objective of this programme is to screen the vision of the students and determine if they have refractive error problems, colour vision anomalies and eye defects.

The free spectacles will be given to the students who meet the criteria, that is poor vision and refractive error with symptoms such as blur vision and headaches.

The chairman of the PTA Datuk Sahimi Sani stated that good eyesight is important for a student's performance in school. He also welcomed the initiative by the School of Optometry and praised UCSI for going the extra mile to sponsor as well as obtain sponsorship for the 55 free spectacles that will be given to the students.

Many of the students were like Mehul and had never had their eyes examined before.

The fact, that the eye tests were conducted

Eye on optometry



UCSI's School of Optometry students conducted free eye tests for 400 students of SMK Tinggi Setapak. Out of this, 55 school students will be provided with free spectacles.

by UCSI's second year optometry students, who were also members of the UCSI Student Optometry Association, made the entire process less intimidating.

The UCSI Optometry students and staff examined the students at five eye testing stations.

The first station was the visual acuity test where patients are instructed to determine the smallest letters they can read on a chart.

They then progress to have their colour vision checked. The third station saw the optometry students using an autorefractometer, which is a computer controlled machine, to gauge the refractive error of the children's eyes.

The final eye test uses the stereo acuity test, also known as the butterfly test, to gauge a patient's depth perception or 3D vision.

The student will then bring his eye test results to the fifth station where they will be determined if they will need glasses. UCSI Student Optometry Association president Norfaten Anisa Izat said that the club members were enthusiastic in participating in the eye screening as this was the first eye screening activity conducted.

"I want to correct the eyesight of as many people as possible. My mother has cataracts and you can say I have personally seen how important it is to have healthy eyes," says Norfaten.

Asst Prof Dr Lili explained that good vision encompasses a host of criteria and affects many aspects of one's health and life. In addition to clear 6/6 vision with or without glasses, a person should also have excellent 3D vision or depth perception that is important for daily tasks such as driving.

The health of the eye is another important aspect that optometrists look out for. Diseases such as cataracts and glaucoma (a disease that damages the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss and blindness) can be detected by optometrists. With early treatment, such diseases can be corrected or managed.

By interacting early with members of the public, students would be able to empathise with their patients and subsequently, become better optometrists.

*Name changed to protect privacy.

■ To know more about the UCSI University's School of Optometry programmes, call 03-9101 8882 or log on to www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry.